

THE GOLDEN-FRONTED WOODPECKERS OF TEXAS AND NORTHERN MEXICO

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THE long series of Golden-fronted Woodpeckers (*Centurus aurifrons*) in the U.S. National Museum shows a definite cline between the birds from north-central Texas, which are lighter in color above and below, and those from Jalisco, Michoacán, and Hidalgo in south-central Mexico, which are blacker on the dorsal surface and somewhat grayer underneath. These differences are most evident in fresh plumage, for with wear during spring and early summer the breast shows a darker gray and the upper surface decidedly more black. Among breeding specimens in worn condition, those from central and southern Mexico are definitely blacker than those from north-central Texas.

The extremes are easily separable, but in southern and southwestern Texas and in northeastern Mexico the two kinds of coloration merge so gradually that over a broad area the whole population is intermediate, making decision as to any sharply drawn dividing line difficult and in part arbitrary. Texas specimens from San Antonio and Seguin south to Corpus Christi and the Brownsville region, while somewhat intermediate, agree best with the southern group, as do those to the west as far as Eagle Pass on the Rio Grande. Beyond this point to the westward in Texas the lighter colored plumage prevails, and it presumably ranges also into northern Coahuila, since this is the coloration found along the Rio Grande River on the American side at Del Rio and Langtry. A good series from Fort Clark, collected by E. A. Mearns, also belongs in the lighter colored group. One male in worn plumage from Monclova, Coahuila, taken May 15, belongs with the darker, southern, form.

An increase of black markings in the white rump feathers is evident in skins of the southern group from San Luis Potosí (Jesús María, Ahualulco, Soledad, Hacienda Angostura) and Jalisco (Tupátaro). This tendency is almost absent from two specimens from Michoacán (Ocotlán) and is present in only part of the material at hand from Nuevo León.

The oldest name available for the birds under discussion, *Picus aurifrons* Wagler, 1829, based on a specimen from Ismiquilpam, Hidalgo, refers to the southern group, which will therefore be known as *Centurus aurifrons aurifrons* (Wagler). Two skins in the U.S. National Museum, from Tula, Hidalgo, are available for comparison. *Picus ornatus* Lesson (*Rev. Zool.* for April 1839, p. 102: from "Mexico," Abeillé Collection) is a synonym of *Centurus aurifrons*.

The northern race will take the name *Centurus aurifrons incanescens* Todd, originally restricted to the "Big Bend" area but now found to apply to the entire population of western and central Texas. Mr. Todd has kindly forwarded for examination the series of 10 skins (5 males and 5 females) on which he based his original description of this race. These differ from the more southern group in the characters outlined above. Other distinctions—variation in the depth of the yellow on the forehead and underparts and in the orange on the nape—mentioned as characters by Todd prove in the larger series now available to be individual variations.

Following is a résumé of the characters and ranges of the two groups:

Centurus aurifrons incanescens Todd. Northern Golden-fronted Woodpecker.

Centurus aurifrons incanescens Todd, Ann. Carnegie Mus., 30 (Dec. 16, 1946):298 (12 miles south of Marathon, Brewster County, Texas).

Subspecific characters.—Averaging lighter above, the dark cross-bars narrower and the white ones correspondingly wider; the white of the rump and upper tail coverts nearly or completely immaculate; under surface slightly paler.

Range.—Western and central Texas from Eastland County south to the "Big Bend" area (near Marathon), Langtry, Comstock, Del Rio, and Fort Clark south probably to northeastern Chihuahua and northern Coahuila.

Centurus aurifrons aurifrons (Wagler). Wagler's Golden-fronted Woodpecker.

Picus aurifrons Wagler, Isis von Oken, 22, pt. 5 (May 1829): col. 512 (Ismiquilpam, Hidalgo).

Subspecific characters.—Averaging darker above, the dark cross-bars wider and the white ones correspondingly narrower; the white of the rump and upper tail coverts usually more or less mixed with black; under surface slightly darker gray.

Range.—North-central Coahuila (Monclova) and southern Texas (Eagle Pass, San Antonio, Seguin) south to Jalisco (Ocotlán, Lagos), Michoacán (Pátzcuaro, Queréndaro), Hidalgo (Tula), and central Tamaulipas (Camargo, Forlón, Victoria, Soto la Marina).

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